

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

A method for transferring one or more files is disclosed. The files are transferred from a host peer to a target peer in which respective message digests are calculated for a file on a host peer and a target peer. A comparison between the calculated digests is made prior to transmission of a file in order to establish whether the target peer possesses the file in question. Where it is found that the message digests are identical, it is assumed that the file is present on the target peer. This can be done in the event that it is suspected that a file to be transferred may already exist on the target peer, for example if the target peer already possesses a file of the same name as that to be transferred. If it is discovered that message digests calculated by the host peer and the target peer are identical, the file is not transmitted by the host peer, thereby preventing an unnecessary use of available bandwidth.